

# The Apostle Peter, Justinian and Romanos the Melodos

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In the case of the poems of Romanos the Melodos the usual difficulties involved in establishing chronologies are further compounded by at least two factors. First, very little is known about this Byzantine poet of the sixth century. A hagiographical life, adorned by a miracle, provides us with meagre information about Byzantium's poetic genius.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, because his poetry is liturgical, composed for the corporate worship of the Church, it is necessarily impersonal and general in character. Romanos speaks most often as a priest, a sacred poet of the *ekklesia*.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, however, rich sources survive for the Golden Age of Justinian, the period of Romanos' poetic activity in Constantinople.<sup>3</sup> Encouraged by these abundant materials, and eager to understand better the poet's creativity, the student of Romanos is tempted to undertake chronological problems.<sup>4</sup> This paper is concerned with the chronology of the six kontakia of Romanos in which the Apostle Peter figures prominently.<sup>5</sup>

1. For a thorough discussion of the sources for the biography of Romanos see K. Mitsakis, *Βυζαντινὴ ὑμνογραφία*, I (Thessaloniki, 1971), pp. 358–92.

2. See E. C. Topping, 'The Poet-Priest in Byzantium', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, XII (1969), 31–41.

3. The sources for the years 518–27 are discussed in detail by A. A. Vasiliev, *Justin the First: An Introduction to the Epoch of Justinian the Great* (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), pp. 9–42. Hereafter this work will be cited as Vasiliev. For the sources for the years 527–65 see C. Diehl, *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1901), pp. xi–xxxviii.

4. The pioneering study by P. Maas, 'Die Chronologie der Hymnen des Romanos', *BZ*, XV (1906), 1–44, remains valuable for chronological investigations of Romanos' work.

5. These are listed below. All citations and references will be to P. Maas and

From the earliest Christian centuries the Apostle Peter seems to belong almost exclusively to Rome. His imprisonment and crucifixion in Romulus' city during the Neronian persecutions (A.D. 64–5) provided the foundation for a strong, local Petrine cult. In the fourth century the Emperor Constantine recognized the cult's importance by founding in Rome a great basilica dedicated to the Apostle. The same emperor built many churches in his new city on the seven hills of Byzantium, but he failed to include one for Peter. Although New Rome borrowed much from Old Rome, she seemed content to leave Peter in the possession of her elder sister.

In time Peter gradually became more than Rome's *πολιούχος*. On the basis of Peter's primacy among the twelve disciples, and his foundation of the church in the imperial city, the bishops of Rome developed an ecclesiology that claimed for themselves supremacy over Christendom.<sup>6</sup> With the collapse of the Roman political and social order in the West during the fifth century, the bishops of Rome intensified their drive for power in the more stable East. They identified themselves with Peter, and the Apostle became their chief weapon in polemics against the Eastern Churches which challenged Roman claims.

In the Greek or Hellenized part of the Empire Peter's cult never prospered conspicuously. The twelve apostles were venerated together and separately, but nowhere in the East did Peter receive the exaggerated honour accorded him in Rome, not even in Antioch whose church he had founded before that of Rome.<sup>7</sup> The Orthodox liturgical calendar generously commemorates earthquakes, church dedications, discoveries of relics, many hundreds of saints, but allots only two feast days (29 June and 16 January) to the chief apostle.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, eight

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C. A. Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica: Cantica Genuina* (Oxford, 1963). This will hereafter be cited as Maas-Trypanis. The translations are my own.

6. For the history of the concept of apostolicity in the West before 451 see F. Dvornik, *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), pp. 39–105.

7. Discussed by G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, 1961), pp. 583–6.

8. The hymns for these two services are called the 'seules acclamations de l'Orient grec sur la primauté de S. Pierre', by J. B. Pitra, *Hymnographie de l'Eglise Grecque* (Rome, 1867), p. 27.

feast days honour St. John Prodromos and five celebrate St. John Chrysostom.

Poets and preachers in the East largely neglected Peter. Although some of Byzantium's best liturgical poets composed hymns for the feast day of 29 June, the hymns are conventional and uninspired because they lack the stimulus of personal devotion and a living cult. Among preachers, this neglect is particularly striking in the case of St. John Chrysostom. Among the Antiochene orator's extant works there is no genuine sermon devoted to this disciple.<sup>9</sup>

The Constantinopolitan church itself granted Peter's cult no special emphasis. When Festus, a Roman senator, visited Constantinople in 496 on official business, he expressed pained surprise that the Feast of Peter and Paul was not observed with fitting grandeur.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, Constantinople's imperial city still did not have a single church dedicated to St. Peter. For a more glorious festival and church of his own the Apostle Peter had to wait for Justinian.

On 10 July 518 Justin I was elevated to the imperial throne.<sup>11</sup> Beside the politically inexperienced new ruler stood his nephew, Justinian, ready to rule the empire. Planning and executing policies in his uncle's name, Justinian immediately reversed the ecclesiastical policy of Anastasius I (491–518) and acted decisively to heal the breach between the Churches of Constantinople and Rome that had existed since 484.

Ten days after Justin's accession the Synod of Constantinople reinstated Chalcedonian orthodoxy and other synods in the East quickly followed suit.<sup>12</sup> In September both Justin and Justinian wrote to Pope Hormisdas expressing their desire to re-establish communion between the churches.<sup>13</sup> On 25 March 519

9. The sermons on Peter printed in *MPG*, L, 725–36, and LIX, 491–6 are included among the spurious works.

10. Theodorus Lector, *MPG*, LXXXVI, 189C–192A. Cf. P. Charanis, *Church and State in the Later Roman Empire: The Religious Policy of Anastasius the First, 491–518* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1939), p. 20; 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki, 1974), p. 49.

11. For the description of the events of Justin's reign I depend on Vasiliev's authoritative monograph (above, n. 3).

12. Vasiliev, pp. 146–60.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 162–4. For Anastasius' futile negotiations with Hormisdas see Charanis, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–63, 66–8, 75–6; 2nd ed., pp. 87–92, 95–7, 104–5.

Hormisdas' delegation arrived in New Rome, where they received a warm welcome. Three days later the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople John II (518–20), yielding to irresistible imperial pressures, reluctantly signed the document of reunion. On Easter Day 519 Christendom was once more united.<sup>14</sup> A papal delegate reported to the anxious Hormisdas in Rome that the event caused great rejoicing in Constantinople and that both the Pope and the Apostle Peter had received honours beyond his power to describe.

Justinian characteristically lost no time in erecting an appropriate monument to the reconciliation which he had effected. In 519 he built near his palace a basilica dedicated to Peter and Paul. According to Procopius it was the first in Constantinople.<sup>15</sup> On 29 June of the same year Justinian wrote to Hormisdas requesting pieces of the chains that had bound the two apostles in prison.<sup>16</sup> Within the year the Pope granted the request. Thus Constantinople acquired a church and relics of St. Peter for the first time. Thanks to Justinian, his namesake, the Apostle Peter gained new honour and his cult a new importance in the Eastern capital.<sup>17</sup> A few years later the détente between the two churches made possible a papal visit to the East.<sup>18</sup> In the spring of 526 Pope John (523–6) arrived in Constantinople, and was enthusiastically welcomed, as though he were the Apostle Peter himself.

Vasiliev has found that the art and coinage of Justin's reign (518–27) reflect the religious peace re-established in 519, the most important event of these years.<sup>19</sup> We should then expect to find some reflections of this historic episode also in the works of the sacred poet writing in Constantinople at that time, the

14. Vasiliev, pp. 175–83.

15. *On the Buildings*, I. iv. 1. This was probably the first of the many churches founded by Justinian. Although he built churches from the Euphrates to the Pillars of Heracles, there is no record of another Justinianic foundation dedicated to Peter.

16. Vasiliev, p. 378.

17. Justinian started life in the Balkans as Flavius Petrus Sabbatius.

18. Vasiliev, pp. 212–21.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 418–26. See also W. H. C. Frend's valuable discussion of relations between the two Romes in the age of Justinian (518–65) in *Relations between East and West in the Middle Ages*, ed. D. Baker (Edinburgh, 1973), pp. 11–28.

Syrian-born Romanos who had come to the capital at the end of the reign of Anastasius I (491–518).<sup>20</sup> The Acacian schism was then in its third decade: Rome and Constantinople spoke to each other only to accuse and condemn.

By the time he arrived in Constantinople, Romanos was already an experienced poet and cleric, since he had served as deacon in Beirut's principal church, the Anastasis. In Constantinople he joined the clergy of the important church and monastery of the Theotokos in the Kyrou quarter of the city.<sup>21</sup> There Romanos composed his kontakia, the complex, elaborate poetical sermons that were sung after the Gospel readings in the Liturgy.<sup>22</sup> In this same monastery Romanos died sometime after 555.<sup>23</sup> Thus the period of Romanos' residence and career in Constantinople coincides with the years of Justinian's ascendancy.

From within the walls of his suburban monastery Romanos must have followed with keen interest the dramatic events that launched a new era for the church. It is not improbable that he personally witnessed or even participated in certain events, such as the memorandum prepared and presented by the Constantinopolitan clergy and monks to the synod that restored orthodoxy on 10 July.<sup>24</sup> The poetic sermons of Romanos, an establishment poet, could hardly fail to reflect the new interest in Peter which had been stimulated by Justin's ecclesiastical policy, and the subsequent friendly contacts with Rome. In fact, Peter is mentioned in seventeen of the fifty-nine kontakia considered genuine by Maas-Trypanis.<sup>25</sup> He is, moreover, the central figure in four kontakia: 17, *On Judas*; 18, *On Peter's Denial*;

20. Cf. Maas-Trypanis, p. xv n. 5.

21. A thaumaturgic icon of the Theotokos gave the church prominence in the capital's Marian cult. Kyros the Prefect built the church in the fifth century. See the interesting study of D. Constantelos, 'Kyros Panopolites, Rebuilder of Constantinople', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies*, XII (1971), 451–64.

22. For a brief account of this form of liturgical poetry see Maas-Trypanis, pp. xi–xv. For more extensive accounts see P. Maas, 'Der Kontakion', *BZ*, XIX (1910), 285–98; E. Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1961), pp. 179–87; Mitsakis, op. cit., pp. 171–93.

23. Reference in Kontakion 48 to the earthquakes of 552 and 555 indicates that Romanos lived on into the last decade of Justinian's long reign (527–65).

24. Described by Vasiliev, pp. 145–6.

25. Cf. Maas-Trypanis, *Index Nominum*, s.v.

33, *On Pentecost*; 39, *On the Healing of the Lame Man by Peter and John*. In addition, Peter is the subject of a long encomium in 29, *On the Resurrection* 6, and a long speech is addressed to him in 31, *On the Mission of the Apostles*. In view of Peter's minor role in the cult of Eastern Christendom, this prominence in Romanos' kontakia can best be explained in relation to Byzantium's reconciliation with Rome in 519, after several decades of bitter hostility.

In 17, *On Judas*, written for Holy Thursday, Romanos creates a vivid image of Peter.<sup>26</sup> Like several other masterpieces by Romanos, this highly wrought kontakion contains psychological portraits of sacred *personae*.<sup>27</sup> In this kontakion the poet presents a triptych, portraits of Jesus, Judas and Peter, a study in contrasts.<sup>28</sup>

In the first five strophes (α'–ε') Romanos develops the betrayer's insecure personality in contrast to Jesus. Jesus is the perfect friend, open, kind, generous and humble. On the other hand, Judas is furtive, stiff, suspicious, unable either to accept or to return friendship. In the second part (στ'–ια') Romanos contrasts Peter with Judas, Jesus' φίλος<sup>29</sup> with His ἐχθρός.<sup>30</sup> This section begins with the protagonist's name, Πέτρος (στ' 1). Named six times,<sup>31</sup> introduced by a formal eulogy, and assigned three speeches,<sup>32</sup> Peter dominates the sacred drama of this poetic homily.<sup>33</sup>

26. For a valuable introduction, notes and French translation consult J. Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode: Hymnes IV* (Paris, 1967), pp. 55–97. This work will henceforth be cited as Grosdidier de Matons. See also the introduction and English translation by Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist I: On the Person of Christ* (Columbia, Missouri, 1970), pp. 167–77, henceforth cited as Carpenter.

27. E.g., Kontakia 1, 2, 4, 19, 45. See the comments on character portrayal in the first kontakion by E. C. Topping, 'St. Romanos: Ikon of a Poet', *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, XII (1966), pp. 102–4.

28. Grosdidier de Matons, p. 59, unjustly calls Romanos a 'mediocre psychologist'. This kontakion and those mentioned above in n. 27 refute this severe judgement by the French scholar.

29. See ε' 4, θ' 4, ι' 5, ιβ' 1. Φιλία is a major theme of the seventeenth kontakion.

30. See γ' 3, ια' 3, ιβ' 3, κα' 7. 31. στ' 1, ζ' 6, 7, θ' 4, ια' 1, 5.

32. στ' 3, θ' 6–ι' 9, ια 6–9. Romanos assigns seventeen verses of direct speech to Peter, two to Jesus and none to Judas.

33. The sacred drama occupies six (στ'–ια') of the hymn's twenty-three strophes.

With an encomium the poet identifies Peter just before his longest speech:

Πέτρος δέ, ἡ ἀρχὴ<sup>34</sup> τῶν φίλων σου  
ὁ κανὼν τῶν ἀκολουθούντων σοι,  
ὁ στρατηγὸς τῆς φαμίλιας σου. (θ' 4–5)

But Peter, the chief of Your friends, the model of Your followers, the general of Your household.<sup>35</sup>

This triad of images of pre-eminence exalts Peter, recognizing his unique position among the disciples, and his place of honour and leadership in the Church. Since Romanos seldom, if ever, identifies a *persona dramatis* by a hymnic description such as this, we may conclude that special circumstances inspired these laudatory verses.

Peter's long, emotional speech (θ' 6–1α' 9), an invention of Romanos, reveals his impetuous character, his devotion to his teacher and friend.<sup>36</sup> He refuses at first to let Jesus wash his feet. Jesus' friendship is enough for him:

οὐ πολὺ ὅτι σοι λελόγισμαι  
καὶ πρῶτος τῶν φίλων σου κέκλημαι; (ι' 5).

Is it not much that I am considered Yours and that I am called the first of Your friends?

When Jesus insists, Peter yields. Unlike the traitor Judas, who had accepted the footwashing without protest, Peter is able to accept and return love.

At the conclusion of Peter's final speech (1α' 6–9), the poet

34. Used of patriarchs by St. Basil in the fourth century, *MPG*, XXXII, 969A.

35. This military metaphor had been applied to Christ by Clement of Alexandria and Methodius, *MPG*, VIII, 392A, and XVIII, 96B. Romanos' contemporary, Cosmas Indicopleustes, used it of Elijah, *MPG*, LXXXVIII, 260B; ed. Wanda Walska-Conus, *Cosmas Indicopleustes Topographie Chrétienne*, II (Sources Chrétiennes, 159 [Paris, 1970]), p. 205.

36. There is nothing comparable in John 13: 4–10, the Scriptural account, where Peter speaks only three brief sentences.

emphasizes for the last time the fundamental contrast between the two disciples:

καὶ Ἰούδας φίλος οὐκ ἐγένετο (ιβ' 1)

And Judas did not become a friend.

Grosdidier de Matons, although he considers this kontakion one of Romanos' best hymns, suggests that it belongs to the period 'antérieur à la maturité du mélode'.<sup>37</sup> Perhaps it is possible to suggest a more precise date for its composition. The encomiastic introduction, the psychological icon, the expansion of the Gospel account of the Footwashing to give Peter a major role, all bespeak heightened interest on the part of the Byzantine poet in the Apostle Peter. Therefore, this kontakion might well have been written sometime in the 520s, probably soon after 519, in the first spontaneous wave of good will between Constantinople and Rome. When Justinian built the church dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul, Romanos composed a kontakion in which he extols Jesus' loyal friend. It could not have been written before 519 during the time of the schism, nor after 536 when relations between Justinian and the papacy were strained.<sup>38</sup>

A second significant encomium to Peter is found in 29, *On the Resurrection 6*, a lyrical Easter hymn, filled with joyful, luminous images of spring.<sup>39</sup> Romanos unexpectedly interrupts its poetic action and structural line to pronounce a lengthy panegyric to Peter. The twelve verses of strophe δ' are all devoted to the disciple, whose name is conspicuously repeated no less than seven times.<sup>40</sup> The poet himself is aware of this irrelevant digression early in the poem.<sup>41</sup>

Romanos follows the text of John 20:1–8, which relates how Peter and John ran to Jesus' tomb when Mary Magdalene

37. Grosdidier de Matons, p. 59.

38. On the church of Sts. Peter and Paul see T. F. Mathews, *The Early Churches of Constantinople. Architecture and Liturgy* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971), pp. 42–7.

39. See Grosdidier de Matons, pp. 355–421, and Carpenter, pp. 311–25.

40. δ' 1, 3, 7 (*bis*), 9 (*bis*), 11.

41. When the poet resumes the narration (ε' 1), he almost apologizes for the interruption.



reported that the stone had been rolled away. John reached the tomb first, but he waited for Peter to come and enter first. The Evangelist does not comment on this, but Romanos at this point interjects an emphatic statement approving John's action:

ἀλλὰ ἀναμένει	τὸν κορυφαῖον, <sup>42</sup>
ἵνα ὡς ποιμένι	ἀκολουθήσῃ ὁ ἀμνός.
	καὶ ὄντως οὕτως ἔπρεπε. (δ' 5–6)

But he awaits the chief apostle, so that like a lamb he might follow the shepherd; and indeed thus he acted properly.

Then Romanos justifies John's deference to Peter in a ringing eulogy composed of quotations from two Scriptural passages and a reference to a third:<sup>43</sup>

Πέτρῳ γὰρ εἶρηται·	Πέτρε, φιλεῖς με;
καί· Τὰ ἀρνία μου	ὡς θέλεις ποίμαινε·
τῷ Πέτρῳ ἐρρέθη·	Μακάριε Σίμων,
τὰς κλείς σοι δώσω	τῆς βασιλείας. <sup>44</sup>
Πέτρῳ πρῶην ὑπέταξε	τὰ κύματα . . . (δ' 7–11)

For to Peter it was said, 'Peter, do you love me?' and, 'Feed my sheep, as you will'. To Peter it was spoken, 'Blessed Simon, I shall give you the keys of the kingdom'. And to Peter he once subjected the waves. . . .

The two quotations come from the classic Petrine texts, on the basis of which the bishops of Rome argued for their supremacy in the Church. Since the Eastern Churches had never accepted the Roman interpretation of these passages, a Byzantine poet would normally hesitate to quote from these controversial texts. But, in the years following 519 Romanos could, without offending Eastern sensibilities, gracefully incorporate them in a panegyric to the Apostle Peter.

42. Peter's most familiar honorific title, but not exclusive to him. See G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford, 1968), s.v. Romanos uses it of Peter again in 18, II Prooemium 2, and 39 ε' 8.

43. John 21: 15–17; Matthew 16: 18–19; 14: 28–31.

44. Cf. κληδοῦχον, 31 στ' 5.

Although strophe *δ'* would have been appropriate in Kontakia 17, 18, 33 and 39, it is clearly an intrusion in Kontakion 29, where Peter is not the central *persona*. What event prompted Romanos to eulogize Peter in this striking way in an Easter hymn?

The visit of Pope John I to Constantinople offers a reasonable answer. This first papal visit, 'an event of great magnitude',<sup>45</sup> caused much excitement in Byzantium in the spring of 526. The Emperor himself went out to meet the Pope, bowing to the ground as he greeted him. On 19 April 526 the Pope and the Patriarch concelebrated Easter in St. Sophia. These unprecedented events could easily have prompted Romanos to eulogize Peter in verses that included even the papacy's two favourite Scriptural texts. Romanos' eulogy to Peter in Kontakion 29 accords perfectly with the temper of Constantinople during Pope John's visit. In it we discern the response of a contemporary poet-priest, his salute to the exalted visitor from Rome. Romanos' most beautiful Resurrection hymn might have been sung for the first time at Easter 526.<sup>46</sup>

It is not possible to suggest equally precise dates for the composition of 18, *On Peter's Denial* and 39, *On the Healing of the Lame Man by Peter and John*.<sup>47</sup> Recorded in the New Testament,<sup>48</sup> these two episodes of Peter's life appear to have attracted neither preachers nor poets in the East.<sup>49</sup> Since both kontakia are rather

45. Vasiliev, pp. 214–15.

46. Except for this extraordinary encomium to Peter there seems to be no other internal evidence by which to date Kontakion 29. Without any support for her suggestion, Sophia Oikonomou, in N. B. Tomadakis, *Ρωμανοῦ Μελοδοῦ ὕμνοι*, IV (Athens, 1961), p. 380, assigns it to the poet's acme, which she places in the 550s, the last decade of Romanos' life. I find it hard to accept this hymn as the work of an aged poet. The exuberant, lyrical style and spirit are more consonant with a young Romanos, exhilarated by the dramatic events he witnessed in the 520s. None of his five other extant Easter kontakia match the beauty and artistry of Kontakion 29.

47. For 18 see Grosdidier de Matons, pp. 99–141, and Carpenter, pp. 179–90; for 39 consult the introduction, notes and translation by Marjorie Carpenter, *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist II: On Christian Life* (Columbia, Missouri, 1973), pp. 33–43.

48. The Denial is related in Matthew 26: 69–75; Mark 14: 66–72; Luke 22: 56–62; John 18: 15–18, 25–7; the Healing of the Lame Man in Acts 3: 1–10.

49. The episode of Peter's denial in particular is discreetly avoided. Cf. Grosdidier de Matons, pp. 99–100. Note, however, a mosaic in the upper register of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, assigned to the first quarter of

pedestrian homilies, we conclude that Romanos nodded because the subjects also failed to excite him.

Despite the fact that Kontakia 18 and 39 deal with important episodes from Peter's career, neither one contains a psychological portrait of the chief apostle. The eighteenth kontakion is no more than a routine sermon on human weakness illustrated by Peter's failure of nerve the night of Jesus' betrayal. Since Peter, Jesus' φίλος ἐπίσημος (θ' 1), denied Him three times, Romanos exploits him as an example of human frailty, stripping Peter of his halo.<sup>50</sup> The deacon-poet earnestly exhorts his listeners to imitate

τὴν ἀγάπῃσιν τοῦ φίλου οὐ τὴν ἄρνησιν τοῦ ὄντως δειλοῦ  
καὶ τὴν φυγὴν. (β' 2)

. . . the friend's love, not the coward's denial and flight.

Likewise, neither kontakion contains a eulogy of Peter, the central figure in each. The only expression of praise occurs in the thirty-ninth kontakion, when the disciple John again shows respect for Peter:

ἀλλ' ὅτι κορυφαῖος ἦν Πέτρος τῶν δώδεκα,  
σπουδάζει ὁ θεολόγος πρεσβεῖα τοῦτω διδόναι. (ε' 8–9)

But because Peter was the head of the twelve disciples, the Theologian takes pains to give him rank.

This is faint praise compared to 17 θ' 4–5 and 29 δ' 1–12. Even this is further diluted when in the same strophe the Byzantine poet pointedly gives John equal credit for the miraculous healing of the lame man.<sup>51</sup> Consistent with Orthodox belief,

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the sixth century, which represents Jesus predicting Peter's denial. See pl. 59 in L. von Matt, *Ravenna* (Cologne, 1971).

50. Not only in this kontakion, but also in 19 γ' 2–3, 30 η' 5, 31 ε' 2–4, 47 κε' 7, 52 α' 4, β' 7. A poet of the Western Church would have been less likely to make such frequent allusions to Peter's weak moment.

51. Romanos contrasts John's deference with 'our' knowledge of the equal status of the two disciples, ε' 6–11.

Romanos insists that the Holy Spirit bestowed the same grace and power on all twelve disciples, that Peter received no special gifts.

The poet's choice of two uncommon subjects provides the only clue to the chronology of Kontakia 18 and 39. On this slender evidence both kontakia might be assigned to the 520s when Peter was 'topical' in Constantinople, and of unusual interest to Romanos' immediate audience.<sup>52</sup> That Kontakia 18 and 39 survive only in the Patmos manuscript indicates their failure to please later congregations. Peter was rarely an engrossing subject in Byzantium.

The archetypal Christian orator and philosopher, Peter figures prominently in Kontakia 31, *On the Mission of the Apostles* and 33, *On Pentecost*.<sup>53</sup> Sharing a common theme, these kontakia celebrate the triumph of Christian *paideia* over classical culture. Kontakia 31 and 33 were both probably composed around 529, ten years after the reconciliation between Constantinople and Rome, when Justinian, emperor now in name as well as fact, closed the schools of philosophy in Athens, the last citadel of pagan culture.<sup>54</sup> In these two poems Romanos, the sacred poet of the Church, acclaims his emperor's action, proclaiming victory for the teachers from Galilee—*καὶ ἡτῶνται Ἀθηναῖοι Γαλιλαίοις* (31 10τ' 2), and ridiculing the vanquished—*τὶ φουσῶσιν καὶ βομβέουσιν οἱ Ἕλληνες*; (33 1ε' 3).

In Kontakion 31, written for the Feast of the Twelve Apostles (30 June), Romanos hymns the *ἀπαίδευτοι* (ιδ' 5) fishermen whom Jesus transformed into *φωστῆρες τῆς οἰκουμένης δλης* (κβ'

52. Concerning Kontakion 18, Grosdidier de Matons, p. 102, writes: 'de la date de cet hymne, nous ne savons donc rien . . .'. Its first editor, J. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra Spicilegio Solesmensi parata*, I (Paris, 1876), p. 116, assigned this hymn either to Romanos' youth or to his old age.

53. For 31 see Carpenter, pp. 337–46, and N. G. Kontosopoulos, in Tomadakis, op. cit., pp. 3–36; for 33 consult Carpenter, pp. 359–71, and J. B. Pitra, op. cit., pp. 157–64.

54. Trypanis in Maas-Trypanis, p. xx n. 3, hesitates to connect 31 with the decree of 529. Maas, op. cit., p. 21, admits a 'probable' relationship between 33 and the edict of 529. Kontosopoulos, op. cit., p. 10, believes 31 to be a work of Romanos' youth.

2).<sup>55</sup> Displacing pagan rhetors and sophists,<sup>56</sup> the disciples disseminated a new *didaskalia*.<sup>57</sup>

Romanos singles out Peter as the leading member of the apostolic teaching mission. He is the first whom Jesus commissions to go out into all corners of the world with the new *didaskalia*. Whereas Jesus directs one strophe to each of the six disciples named in the kontakion, He addresses Peter in two strophes (ε'–στ'). Like the encomium of 29 δ' 7–11, this address includes references (στ' 1, 5) to the two Petrine texts mentioned earlier.<sup>58</sup> The good will generated by the rapprochement with Rome in 519 continued through the following decade. Later, in strophe ιστ' celebrating Athens' downfall, Peter alone of the disciples is mentioned. Romanos credits him with the destruction of pagan literature:

παύσει λοιπὸν      συγγραφὰς ὁ Κηφᾶς ἐξαγγέλων ἐμέ. (ιστ' 3)

Proclaiming me, Cephas will put an end to writing.

For the Feast of Pentecost, on which the Christian Church commemorates both its birthday and the descent of the Holy Spirit, Romanos wrote Kontakion 33. In it he created a dynamic icon of Peter, Christianity's first charismatic teacher and preacher. The sketch for this icon exists in the account of Pentecost in Acts 1:12–2:42. But Romanos, inspired by the events of 518, 526 and 529, amplifies it with life and intensity absent in the Scriptural text. Here Peter speaks like a contemporary Christian sophist justifying Justinian's edict closing the Athenian schools.

From the very beginning Peter dominates the thirty-third kontakion.<sup>59</sup> In the first scene (γ'–ε') the disciples have

55. See especially γ' 2–6, κβ' 1–6. Cf. 33 ιη'.

56. Before the days of Romanos Christian art had represented the disciples as philosophers. Cf. A. Grabar, *Christian Iconography: A Study of Its Origins* (Princeton, 1968), p. 33.

57. A recurrent motif, see β' 2, ε' 1, ιδ' 1, κ' 1. For other 'academic' imagery see II Prooemium 1, α' 2, ε' 2, ζ' 2, ι' 5, ιστ' 1, ιη' 1.

58. See above p. 9.

59. His name occurs six times: γ' 5, 6, δ' 1, ι' 1, ιγ' 1, ιε' 5. Andrew is the only other discipline named, ιε' 6. James and John are referred to as the sons of Zebedee, ιε' 7.

assembled in a room in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. Alone, bereft of their divine teacher, they now depend on Peter. The disciples gather around Peter, like sheep around a shepherd (ε' 1–2). With this familiar image Romanos indicates that, after Christ's departure, Peter assumes the role of leader.<sup>60</sup> This includes also the role of priest. Peter performs a liturgical function when he leads the disciples in prayer. This scene (γ'–ε') of the Church at prayer on the day of its birth was invented by Romanos to portray Peter the first priest. By the title *ἐξάρχος* (γ' 6) he invests Peter with episcopal dignity.<sup>61</sup>

Peter likewise dominates the second scene (θ'–ιγ'). After the mysterious tongues of fire appear, the disciples remain silent, numb with fear. Only Peter speaks, because he alone has understood the mystery of the heavenly fire that does not burn. In a magnificent, carefully structured speech (ι'–ιβ'), an invention of Romanos, Peter reveals quick imagination, passion and intuitive understanding.<sup>62</sup> With fiery eloquence Peter preaches the first Christian sermon, exalting faith over reason, Christianity over Hellenism. The speech ends with a fervent exhortation to Peter's comrades:

τί δειλιῶμεν ἀφλεκτον      φλόγα λοιπόν;  
 ῥόδα τὸ πῦρ νομίσωμεν,      ὅπερ καὶ ἐστίν.  
 ἐπὶ τὰς κάρας γὰρ ἡμῶν      ὥσπερ ἀνθη ἐπετέθη,  
 ἐν οἷς ἐστεφάνωσεν, ἐκόσμησεν, ἐλάμπρυνεν ἡμᾶς  
 τὸ πανάγιον πνεῦμα.

Therefore why do we fear flames that do not burn? Let us consider the fire roses, which in truth it is: it has been placed around our heads as though flowers with which the All-holy Spirit has crowned, adorned and illuminated us.

60. See also 29 & 6. For Peter as the Good Shepherd in Early Christian art see Grabar, *op. cit.*, p. 70 and ill. 170.

61. A title which the Church borrowed in the fourth century from official administrative vocabulary to denote a metropolitan whose episcopal jurisdiction extended over a whole province. Cf. E. A. Sophocles, *Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods*, I (New York, 1957), s.v. It was first used of Peter by Isidorus Pelusiotis in the fifth century, *MPG*, LXXVIII, 385B.

62. The account of Pentecost in Acts 1–2:13 contains nothing that can be considered the model for this speech.

Thus Romanos depicts the spiritual fire that animates the ideal Christian orator and teacher as embodied in the Apostle Peter.

After Romanos has completed the sacred drama (γ'-ιε') of Pentecost, he delivers a vehement attack on classical culture. In every verse of strophe ιζ' the Christian poet condemns Greek philosophy, rhetoric and poetry, ridiculing with puns Plato,<sup>63</sup> Homer, Demosthenes,<sup>64</sup> Aratus and Pythagoras. He openly rejoices that they have all become hollow, lifeless relics of a rejected past. In this way Romanos directly links Pentecost with the closing of the schools of Athens in 529, a thousand years after their foundation.

At the first Pentecost the Holy Spirit had introduced into the world a new γνῶσις (δ' 7), which rejected reason for faith and revelation. On that occasion Peter had proclaimed Christian *Gnosis* to the world. Five centuries later, in 529, the Emperor Justinian made its triumph official. According to Romanos' vision, Justinian completed the Christian mission begun by Peter. In Kontakia 31 and 33 the Byzantine poet hymns the Emperor and the Apostle.

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Ohio*

63. Cf. 31 ιε' 5. Maas, op. cit., p. 21 n. 3, cites an attack on Plato by Justinian. Like Romanos the emperor punned on the philosopher's name.

64. Cf. 31 ιστ' 2.

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